

REMARKS

A Request for Continued Examination (RCE) is being filed contemporaneously herewith. Applicants request reconsideration of the above-identified application in light of the amendments and remarks described herein.

Claims 1-23 were pending in this application, with Claims 1-14 being withdrawn from consideration. Claims 15, 19, and 23 have been amended, Claims 1-14 have been canceled, and new Claims 24 and 25 have been added. Therefore, Claims 15-25 are currently pending in this application.

Claims 15-23 have been rejected. Specifically, Claims 19 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), and Claims 15-18 and 21-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, applicants request reconsideration and allowance of all claims.

Applicant-Initiated Interview Request

Applicants in due course will be submitting an Applicant-Initiated Interview Request. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner defer taking any further action on the case until after such interview has been conducted.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,447,037, issued to Crouch (hereinafter "Crouch"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections of these claims.

As is well known, anticipation requires the presence in a single prior art reference disclosure of each and every element of the claimed invention.

Claim 19, as currently amended, recites a method of using a coupling device for providing redundant attachment between an arm of a user and a device having a closed handle.

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The method includes obtaining a coupling device having first and second ends, the first end including a first loop defining a first opening and the second end including a second loop defining a second opening. A central axis of the first opening is non-parallel with a central axis of the second opening when the coupling device is in its static state. The method further includes routing either the first loop or the second loop through the closed handle; inserting the second loop through the first opening without rotating the central axis of the first opening more than 45 degrees from the static condition with respect to the central axis of the second opening; and pulling the second loop through the first opening to tighten the coupling device to the closed handled device.

Crouch generally purportedly describes a coupling device and method of using the coupling device for gathering and carrying a plurality of bags with handles. *See* Crouch, at Col. 4, lines 1-12. The device 10 comprises a strap 12 having an elongated body 14, the opposite ends 16 and 18 of which are configured as closed loop portions 20, each closed loop portion 20 defining an opening 22. *See* Crouch, at Col. 3, lines 22-27. Referring to FIGURE 1 of Crouch, the central axis of the first opening 16 is parallel with the central axis of the second opening 18 prior to inserting the second loop 18 through the first opening 16. Further, the openings are of substantially similar size. *See* Crouch, at Col. 3, lines 42-52. Referring to FIGURE 3 of Crouch, either the second loop 18 or the first loop 16 must be rotated to insert the second loop 18 through the first opening 16.

The Office Action states that the argument that Crouch fails to disclose that the central axis of the first opening is non-parallel to the central axis of the second opening is not persuasive. Specifically, the Office Action states that "[t]his limitation does not provide any details of when the axis of the first opening is non-parallel to the axis of the second opening.

Therefore, this limitation is met when the coupling is in use and the axes are not parallel to each other."

To address this argument raised by the Office Action, Claim 19 has been currently amended to recite that the central axes of the first and second openings are non-parallel when the coupling device is in its static condition. The non-parallel central axes are best seen in FIGURES 6 and 15 of the present disclosure, in which the coupling device is shown in the static condition. In contrast, referring to FIGURE 2 of Crouch, the central axes of the first and second loops of Crouch are clearly parallel with one another prior to inserting the second loop through the first opening. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Crouch fails to teach or suggest each and every element of amended Claim 19.

Moreover, Crouch fails to teach or suggest "inserting said second loop through said first opening without rotating said central axis of said first opening more than 45 degrees from said static condition with respect to said central axis of said second opening." This claim limitation is best seen with reference to FIGURE 9 of the present disclosure. There, the second loop is inserted through the first opening with little to no rotating of the central axes of either of the first and second openings. In contrast, referring to FIGURE 3 of Crouch, the central axis of either the second loop 18 or the first loop 16 must be rotated a substantial amount from its initial position to insert the second loop 18 through the first opening 16.

The Office Action further states that "the disclosure of the current application fails to provide any advantages or unexpected results obtained from having the central axis of the first opening being non-parallel to the central axis of the second opening." Applicants submit that many advantages of the configuration exist. For example, by having the central axis of the first opening non-parallel with the central axis of the second opening in the static condition, the second loop is easier to insert into the first loop. Additionally, the non-parallel central axes

minimize the amount of device twisting when the coupling device is oriented in the position shown in FIGURE 1. Such twisting can be readily understood upon review of FIGURES 5 and 6 of Crouch.

For at least these reasons, applicants respectfully submit that Claim 19 is not anticipated by Crouch and should thus be found allowable. Additionally, because Claim 20 depends from Claim 19, it should also be found allowable.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Crouch. In addition, Claims 17, 18, and 21-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Crouch in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,216,319, issued to Elkins (hereinafter "Elkins"). Applicants respectfully disagree.

To establish a case of obviousness, the prior art references must teach or suggest all of the claim limitations; there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references or in the knowledge of one skilled in the art, to modify the references or to combine the reference teachings; and there must be a reasonable expectation of success.

Claim 15, as currently amended, recites a method of using a coupling device for providing redundant attachment between an arm of a user and a device having a closed handle. The method includes obtaining a coupling device having first and second ends, the first end including a first loop defining a first opening and the second end including a second loop defining a second, larger opening. A central axis of the first opening is non-parallel with a central axis of the second opening when the coupling device is in its static condition. The method further includes routing either the first loop or the second loop through the closed handle; inserting the second loop through the first opening; and pulling the second loop through the first opening to tighten the coupling device to the closed handled device.

Claim 23, as currently amended, recites a method of using a coupling device for providing redundant attachment between an arm of a user and a device having a closed handle. The method includes obtaining a coupling device having first and second ends, the first end including a first loop defining a first opening and the second end including a second loop defining a second opening. A central axis of the first opening is non-parallel with a central axis of the second opening when the coupling device is in its static condition. The coupling device further has a friction-engaging size adjustment collar slidably coupled to the second loop. The method further includes routing either the first loop or the second loop through the closed handle; inserting the second loop through the first opening without rotating the central axis of the first opening more than 45 degrees from the static condition with respect to the central axis of the second opening; pulling the second loop through the first opening to tighten the coupling device to the closed handled device; sliding the second loop over a wrist of a user; and sliding the friction-engaging size adjustment collar along the second loop in the direction of the user's wrist.

Applicants respectfully submit that Crouch fails to teach or suggest each and every element of amended Claims 15 and 23 and the claims depending therefrom, as well as Claims 21 and 22 that depend from Claim 19. First, for the same reasons detailed above with respect to Claim 19, Crouch fails to teach or suggest that "wherein a central axis of said first opening is non-parallel with a central axis of said second opening when said coupling device is in its static condition." Elkins fails to cure the deficiencies of Crouch because Elkins is directed to a single loop device.

Second, regarding Claim 15 and the claims depending therefrom, applicants submit that Crouch fails to teach or suggest "a second, larger opening." Contrary to Claim 15, Crouch teaches loop portions that are of substantially the same configuration and dimension.

The Office Action states that the argument that Couch fails to disclose that the first opening is sized to be smaller than the second opening "fails to persuade because the disclosure of the current application only states that the first opening is preferably smaller than the second opening but it fails to provide any advantages or unexpected results obtained by having this dimension." Applicants submit that the advantage of the first opening being sized smaller than the second opening is also to minimize the amount of device twisting when the coupling device is oriented in the position shown in FIGURE 1. Such twisting can be readily understood upon review of FIGURES 5 and 6 of Crouch.

Third, regarding Claim 23 and for the same reasons detailed above with respect to Claim 19, Crouch fails to teach or suggest "inserting said second loop through said first opening without rotating said central axis of said first opening more than 45 degrees from said static condition with respect to said central axis of said second opening."

For at least these reasons, applicants respectfully submit that Claims 15-18 and 21-23 are not rendered obvious by Crouch or Elkins, either alone or in any combination, and should thus be found allowable.

New Claims 24 and 25

Applicants respectfully submit that new Claims 24 and 25 are in condition for allowance and do not present any new subject matter.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, applicants respectfully submit the present application is in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned with any remaining questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily C. Peyser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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